

Your Partner in Health



Happy New Year from Cedars-Sinai Medical Group



Message from the CEO

Happy New Year! Last year was another year of great accomplishments for our group, and I have a lot to share with you in this newsletter. We are proud to have been recognized by the Integrated Healthcare Association (IHA) as one of the top 10 medical groups in Southern California in 2005. Please read Dr. Deutsch's article to learn more about this prestigious award.

In this issue, you will also find an article on diabetes care and information about the diabetes class we offer at Cedars-Sinai Medical Group. We've also included an informative article on managing your medications and possible drug interactions that could put you at risk.

Another topic we address is the new Medicare Part D program. Many of you have come to us with questions about how to navigate this new program and what the implications are for you.

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Medical Directors' Corner

Cedars-Sinai Medical Group Top Rated in Southern California



Stephen Deutsch, MD
Medical Director, Cedars-Sinai
Medical Care Foundation

In October 2005, the Integrated Healthcare Association (IHA) released the names of the top 10 physician groups in Southern California, and both Cedars-Sinai Medical Group and Cedars-Sinai Health Associates were among them.

We were awarded this prestigious honor for the high quality of care provided to you, our patients. We are extremely proud of our physicians and staff for earning this award and know we could not have received this recognition without input from the surveys you fill out on our behalf. I thank all of you for your wonderful comments and feedback. Our goal is to deliver appropriate preventive care, be available for acute needs as they may arise, and provide excellent management for patients with chronic ailments.

Our medical group participated in the IHA's Pay for Performance Program, which examines and "grades" groups for 10 measures of quality care. We scored above the 90 percentile on seven of those measures, and just below the 90 percentile for the other three. In Los Angeles, we were the top performer in almost all quality measures.

The IHA represents health plans, medical groups and scientists involved in healthcare research. The top-performing medical groups were selected from among 225 groups. Each was evaluated in the areas of recommended clinical care, patient satisfaction and investment in information technologies that promote quality care.

Thank you again for your support in participating in our patient surveys.

Warmest Wishes for a Happy and Healthy 2006



Cheryl Dunnett, MD
Medical Director,
Cedars-Sinai Medical Group

With this new year come changes for myself as well as for our medical group. I have announced that I am stepping down from my position as medical director of Cedars-Sinai Medical Group.

After an action-packed and challenging ten years, the decision to make this transition was not easy. However, I am enthusiastically returning to my clinical practice at our Olympic Boulevard office on a full-time basis. I look forward to my new role, and I am excited for others to have the opportunity to help manage the next phase of our medical group's growth.

The Board of Directors of the medical group has chosen Dr. Howard Wynne as the new medical director. He will assume his post in April. Dr. Wynne has been a full-time internist with the group since July 1998. He attended medical school at Loyola University of Chicago, Stritch School of Medicine, graduating cum laude. He completed his residency training at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in June 1997. Dr. Wynne served as chief resident in the Department of Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center from 1997-1998. Prior to that, he received his undergraduate degree at the University of California, San Diego, majoring in both biochemistry and cell biology.

For me, being able to lead such a superb group of physicians during this period of growth and progress has been the experience of a lifetime. I have enjoyed working closely with the physicians, their staff and the management team. I've also appreciated having the opportunity to speak with and meet so many of you over the years – our patients are the best.

I wish you all a wonderful year and look forward to seeing my patients at our next appointment.

Are you at risk of dangerous drug interactions?



Michelle Israel, MD
Internist

If you are over 65, you probably take on average between two and six prescription drugs and one to three over-the-counter medications on a routine basis. Taking multiple medications increases your chance of having a negative drug interaction. Also, as you get older your body's ability to absorb, process and eliminate certain medications changes. These changes can increase the likelihood of being affected by an unexpected drug interaction.

Doctors often prescribe multiple medicines at the same time. In these instances, your doctor will take extra precautions to make sure you don't risk negative drug interactions. It's very important that your doctor is aware of all medications you are taking.

Some of you have asked questions about over-the-counter medicine. Just because you can buy something over the counter, doesn't mean it's safe for you to take. Over-the-counter medications can maintain health and prevent further illness, but taking combinations of drugs means you could be at risk for unintended interactions. Remember, many over-the-counter medications available from your pharmacy were given on a prescription-only basis just a few years ago. For some older adults, taking what they think is a safe and harmless anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen, may be dangerous and can lead to bleeding or kidney failure. Also, for patients taking Coumadin® (warfarin), some antibiotics may increase the amount of time your body takes to form a blood clot, which means you may be at risk of serious bleeding. These dangerous side effects are more likely to happen when certain drugs are combined.

Herbal supplements are popular, but they are not regulated in the same way as prescription medications. You can't always be sure of the quality or strength of the herbs you buy, and some of them may interact with



medicines you are already taking. Be sure to consult with your doctor or pharmacist before taking over-the-counter medicines or herbal supplements.

Taking several medications at one time doesn't have to be dangerous. Many older adults are taking combinations of medications and dietary supplements that are medically necessary. As long as potential interactions are monitored, the benefits can far outweigh the risks.

At Cedars-Sinai Medical Group, we have created a clinic to identify patients at risk for negative medication interactions. Our goal is to increase awareness of possible medication interactions, decrease the total number of medications used, improve patient compliance through patient and provider education and adjust medication dosages to appropriate levels based on patient needs.

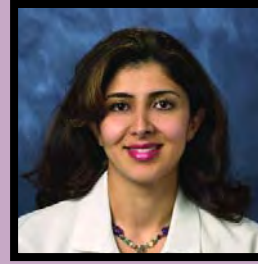
We ask that you bring all your medications to your appointments, including prescription and over-the-counter medications, herbal products, vitamins, supplements and home remedies.

Prior to any medication review, each patient undergoes a simple, 10-minute screening test for memory loss. A pharmacist then meets with the patient to assess his or her understanding of each medication's purpose and directions for use. Once the actual medication schedule is determined, the pharmacist evaluates it for duplicate therapy, inappropriate dosage and drug interactions and asks the patient if any drug-related problems have occurred. Expiration dates and drug storage methods are also reviewed. Patients are presented with an individualized medication table, information sheets for individual drugs and medication organizers (pill boxes), when appropriate.

After the patient's visit, the pharmacist will send the recommendations to the referring physician or the patient's primary care provider.

If you have questions regarding the medications you currently take, please contact your physician.

Travel Safety



Parastoo Rezai,
PharmD
Clinical Pharmacist

Traveling almost always entails a certain degree of adventure, enthusiasm and, at times, unexpected surprises. Although some misfortunes, such as bad weather or flight delays, may be inevitable, smart travelers can effectively prevent other circumstances from ruining their trip by planning ahead and taking necessary health precautions. To help you, the following are general travel safety tips.

Before you go

Immunizations. Before booking your trip, make sure you allow at least six to eight weeks prior to the departure date to receive recommended vaccines for your chosen destinations. Some vaccines, such as yellow fever, may be mandatory for the country you are visiting, while others may be recommended based on the types of activities you have planned during your vacation. You can look up vaccine requirements and/or recommendations for the country you are visiting by consulting the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website www.cdc.gov or by talking to experts that specialize in travel immunizations.

Health insurance. Before departing on trips to other countries, contact your health insurance carrier to find out if coverage is provided outside the United States and how you can access medical services in each country, if necessary.

What to take with you

The following is a general guideline for what you need to pack before departing.

Sunscreen. When buying sunscreen look for an SPF number of at least 15 or higher. The best way to avoid sunburn is to wear protective, light-colored clothing with long sleeves and long pants. Broad-brimmed hats can help protect your face. Keep in mind that if you are also applying insect repellent, sunscreen effectiveness can be decreased.

Insect repellent. The most effective topical insect repellent you can purchase will contain a chemical called N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide, also known as DEET.

Products can contain DEET in concentrations from 10 percent up to 100 percent. The recommended DEET concentration considered safe and effective is between 20 and 40 percent. You may also want to purchase permethrin-containing products to spray on your clothes, mosquito nets, tents and sleeping bags. Keep in mind that mosquitoes are attracted to dark-colored clothing, perfumes, hair products, perfumed soaps and lotions.

First aid kit. No matter where your travels take you, always prepare a kit that contains bandages, gauze, small tweezers, scissors, topical antiseptic cream, topical corticosteroids and calamine lotion for insect bites and sunburns, painkillers and any prescribed or over-the-counter medications for traveler's diarrhea and motion sickness. If you are traveling with children, take along a rehydration mixture, such as Pedialyte®, in case of severe diarrhea.

Prescription medications. Don't forget to take along oral medications that may be needed for malaria prevention and an ample supply of other medications that have been prescribed by your physician for other health conditions. Make sure the bottles are labeled clearly, and keep available a list of the brand and generic equivalents available in case customs inspectors ask about your medications.

During your trip

Water precautions.

Drinking tap water in foreign countries can increase your risk of acquiring illnesses from bacteria, viruses or parasites. One of the best methods of killing these organisms is to boil the water vigorously for one minute — or three minutes at altitudes greater than 6,000 feet. Some travelers choose to purchase iodine or chlorine tablets to use as a disinfectant where boiling is not possible. Remember, some organisms will not be killed with these tablets unless the water is treated for 15 hours. Another method is using portable water filters, such as reverse-osmosis filters, to help protect against organisms. Make sure you read the fine print prior to purchasing these filters since not all brands



protect against every organism. Remember, the best way to protect yourself is to drink bottled water that has an unbroken serrated seal and avoid ice in your drinks. Also, brush your teeth with bottled water.

Food precautions. Remembering the acronym BCP can help you decrease your chances of getting sick while on your trip. BCP stands for an old saying, “Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it.” The safest way to kill unwanted organisms in food is to make sure everything is thoroughly cooked and arrives at your table steaming hot. Remember, some foods that are steamed, such as shellfish, are still not considered safe to consume. Avoid street vendors or eateries that don’t look reputable from the outside. Stay away from salads or raw vegetables since they may still have organisms on them from the soil where they were picked or from the water used to clean them. The last part of the BCP acronym addresses fruits that should only be consumed if they are contained in a thick peel. Fruits with thick peels — such as bananas or oranges — keep the inner fruit intact and are safe to consume.

Taking certain safety precautions and using common sense while traveling can serve as the best strategies to keep your travel fun and safe. The more you know, the more you can prevent mishaps on your trip. This understanding will hopefully lead to a memorable vacation depicted by a camera full of photographs testifying to your wonderful experiences while abroad.

Cedars-Sinai Medical Group offers a Travel

Consultation and Immunization Service, where clinical pharmacists are available to provide immunizations and information addressing each patient’s individual needs. For more information, please call (310) 385-3534, option #3.

Medicare Part D Benefits: Basic Facts

Q: What is Medicare Part D?

A: The introduction of Part D coverage is the biggest change to Medicare since its inception. Basically, it is prescription drug insurance.

Q: When does Part D start?

A: The Medicare Part D program began January 1, 2006. Sales of insurance products providing this coverage began November 15, 2005.

Q: What if I don’t use many prescription medications right now?

A: Coverage is purchased for eventual use. The fact that you do not currently take any or very many prescription medications is not a reason to forego participation in Part D. The chances are likely that you will require significantly more prescription medications as you age.

Q: Do I need to sign up today?

A: The most important aspect to remember about Part D coverage is timing. If you don’t obtain coverage before May 15, 2006, you may incur a penalty to your monthly Social Security payment. If you join after May 15, 2006, your Part D premiums may be increased for late enrollment. The sooner you join a plan, the sooner you can decide whether it works well for you. If you don’t like the plan you join first, you have the option to change plans once before you are “locked in” to your choice on May 15, 2006. Making your initial choice sooner rather than later increases your chances of making the best final choice before the deadline.

Q: Who can I call if I have more questions?

A: If you would like clarification on Part D, you can call Cedars-Sinai Medical Group’s Patient Services Department at (800) 700-6424. The office is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Medicare’s website, www.medicare.gov, also provides consumers with information and decision-making tools.

Patient Satisfaction Surveys

Some of you will be receiving patient satisfaction surveys in the near future. Please take the time to answer these surveys and let your health plans know that we are your medical group of choice. If you have any concerns about your care, please call our Patient Services Department at (800) 700-6424 so that we can address them.

What You Need to Know about Diabetes



Oona Kahn, MD
Internist/Endocrinologist

Diabetes is an illness affecting 16 million Americans. By far the most common form is type 2 diabetes, which affects 15 million individuals. Of those, six million don't know they have the condition. The best test for diabetes is a simple, fasting blood sugar. This test is critical because many patients do not have the classic symptoms of diabetes, which include thirst, frequent urination and unintentional weight loss. Some studies show that type 2 diabetes may be present for up to 10 years before it is diagnosed.

The risk factors for diabetes are:

- 45 years old or older
- Overweight or obese
- Family history of diabetes
- African American, Hispanic American, Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander
- Delivered a baby weighing more than 9 lbs or have been diagnosed with gestational diabetes in the past
- Sedentary lifestyle
- High blood pressure or high cholesterol
- History of polycystic ovary syndrome
- Elevated fasting glucose on prior testing

If one of these risk factors describes you, be sure to schedule an annual diabetes screening.

If you have diabetes, it is important to “know your numbers.” By far, the most important number is your hemoglobin a1c. This test measures your diabetes control over the past three-month period. The a1c goal is less than seven percent, corresponding to an average blood sugar measurement of approximately 150 mg/dL. In addition, your blood sugars should be:

- 80 to 120 before meals or upon waking
- 100 to 140 at bedtime

Blood pressure and cholesterol levels should be well controlled, and appropriate eye and foot care should be maintained. Finally, an annual visit with a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator is recommended to provide education and guidance regarding optimal management of your diabetes.

For interested patients, Cedars-Sinai Medical Group offers a diabetes education class. For more information or to register, please call (323) 965-4780.

Type 2 Diabetes 101 Education Class

Learn how to manage this chronic illness, get healthy, stay healthy and prevent complications.

Taught by

Diane McWhorter, FNP, CDE

Topics Covered:

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Lab tests and exams
- Which tests you need
- Why you need them
- How often you should have them
- Blood glucose self-monitoring
- Medications
- Signs and symptoms of high and low blood sugar
- Tips for staying healthy and preventing complications

For additional information and to register, call (323) 965-4780. Please note that a copay may apply.

Your Partner in Health

Since 1985, Cedars-Sinai Medical Group has been your Partner in Health, with more than 75 physicians providing primary care and a full array of specialty services, including:

- Cardiology
- Dermatology (medical and cosmetic)
- Endocrinology
- Ear, nose and throat (ENT)
- Executive Medical Services
- Gastroenterology
- General surgery
- Geriatric medicine
- Hand surgery
- Hematology/oncology
- Internal medicine
- Nephrology
- Obstetrics and gynecology
- Optometry, ophthalmology and LASIK vision correction
- Orthopedic surgery
- Pediatric medicine
- Plastic and reconstructive surgery
- Pulmonary medicine
- Rheumatology
- Sports medicine
- Disease-specific programs
- Women's health

Appointments: Please arrive 15 minutes early to check in. Call your doctor's office if you think you will be late; otherwise, it may be necessary to reschedule your appointment. Please call us 24 hours ahead of time if you need to cancel so we can schedule something more convenient for you. Also, please bring your current medications to every office visit.

Test Results: The time needed to receive lab test results varies depending on the test. During your visit, please ask your doctor how and when you will receive your results.

Prescription Refills: If you need a prescription refill, you will be served most quickly if your pharmacy calls or faxes your doctor's office directly during regular office hours. Please plan for it to take up to two working days for your refill(s) to be authorized.

Referral to a Specialist: Depending on your insurance, you may need a referral from your physician to see a specialist. If so, and your physician decides it is medically necessary, please allow seven to 10 working days for this process. All Utilization Management decision-making is based only on the appropriateness of care and service. None of our physicians or staff members are encouraged or rewarded (financially or otherwise) for issuing denials.

Insurance: Cedars-Sinai Medical Group accepts most health insurance plans and Medicare. Please check with your doctor's office to see which plan he or she accepts. Please bring your insurance card and co-payment (if required) to every doctor's office appointment.

Learn More about Us: You can learn more about your Cedars-Sinai Medical Group physician, office locations, telephone numbers, services and wellness classes on our website at www.cedars-sinaimedicalgroup.org.

For more information about Cedars-Sinai Medical Group, please contact Patient Services, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at (800) 700-6424.



Locations

To meet your needs, we are conveniently located in Beverly Hills and Los Angeles. Please call our offices during our hours of operation to schedule an appointment, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Urgent Care hours are from 5 to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.

Beverly Hills

200 N. Robertson Blvd.
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Dermatology: (310) 385-3300
Hematology/Oncology: (310) 385-3297/385-3343
Internal Medicine: (310) 385-3262
Pediatrics: (310) 385-3345
Orthopedic Surgery/Sports Medicine: (310) 385-3326

250 N. Robertson Blvd.
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Internal Medicine: (800) 700-6424
Vision Center: (310) 385-3450

99 N. La Cienega Blvd.
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Endocrinology/Internal Medicine: (310) 385-3228
Gastroenterology: (310) 385-3506
Internal Medicine: (310) 385-3353
Obstetrics/Gynecology: (310) 385-3380

Los Angeles

5901 W. Olympic Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90036
Internal Medicine: (800) 700-6424

8635 W. Third St.
Los Angeles, CA 90048
General Surgery: (310) 423-0289
Hand, Orthopedic, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery: (310) 423-5900
Nephrology/Internal Medicine: (310) 659-4320
Executive Medical Services: (310) 423-2374

Message from the CEO

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We have created a Frequently Asked Questions article to answer these questions.

The new year brings new changes to the administration of our medical group. Dr. Cheryl Dunnett will be stepping down as medical director after 10 outstanding years of service. She is returning to her clinical practice full time. After reviewing many excellent candidates, the Board of Directors has chosen Dr. Howard Wynne as the incoming medical director. Please read more about the transition in Dr. Dunnett's column.

Our goal is to provide information written by your physicians to keep you informed about relevant healthcare issues. Please feel free to let us know topics that are of particular interest to you so we may address them in future newsletters.

Wishing you and your family a healthy and happy new year,



Thomas D. Gordon

Chief Executive Officer

Continuous Quality Improvement

Voice of the Customer Program WE CARE

At CSMG, our Voice of the Customer Program allows you, our customer and patient, to provide us with feedback about the quality of care and services you have received. Your questions and concerns are important to us, and we want to hear from you, so please call our Patient Services Department at (800) 700-6424. If you have any billing questions, please call (800) 851-0211.



200 N. Robertson Blvd., Suite 101
Beverly Hills, CA 90211

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